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AMERICAN SHOT A264 3RD NL NO PICKUP 300

ATHENS, GREECE (AP) - RICHARD S. WELCH, A SPECIAL ASSISTANT IN THE U.S. EMBASSY, WAS SHOT AND KILLED TUESDAY BY THREE GUNMEN AS HE APPROACHED HIS HOME AFTER ATTENDING A CHRISTMAS PARTY, POLICE REPORTED.

THEY SAID WELCH'S WIFE, KIKI, WAS BESIDE HIM WHEN HE WAS SHOT DOWN BUT ESCAPED UNHARMED BY RUNNING AWAY. AFTER WELCH'S ASSAILANTS HAD FLED IN A CAR, SHE RETURNED TO HELP HER HUSBAND LYING ON THE PAVEMENT.

THE DIPLOMAT WAS RUSHED TO A NEARBY HOSPITAL BUT DIED SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVAL.

WELCH, A 46-YEAR-OLD CAREER DIPLOMAT, RECENTLY WAS ACCUSED BY THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPER ATHENS NEWS OF BEING AN AGENT FOR THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.

HE AND HIS WIFE HAD ATTENDED A PARTY GIVEN BY U.S. AMBASSADOR JACK B. KUBISCH AT HIS RESIDENCE FOR HUNDREDS OF GREEK AND AMERICAN GUESTS. THE GUNMEN APPARENTLY WERE WAITING IN AMBUSH FOR WELCH AT HIS VILLA IN THE EXCLUSIVE SUBURB OF PSYCHICHO, ABOUT EIGHT MILES FROM THE GREEK CAPITAL.

WELCH HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE ATHENS EMBASSY ABOUT FIVE MONTHS AGO AFTER SERVICE WITH THE EMBASSIES IN PERU, GUATEMALA AND CYPRUS.

HE WAS A 1951 GRADUATE OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY AND SPENT NINE YEARS AS AN ECONOMIC ANALYST WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY BEFORE ENTERING THE STATE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN SERVICE IN 1960.

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATIONS HERE BY GREEKS WHO BELIEVE THAT AMERICA SUPPORTED THE TURKISH INVASION OF CYPRUS IN JULY 1974. WASHINGTON ALSO HAS BEEN ACCUSED BY SOME GREEKS OF SUPPORTING THE MILITARY JUNTA THAT RULED GREECE FOR SEVEN YEARS BEFORE COLLAPSING DURING THE CYPRUS CRISIS.

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